
 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		52
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 1 of 22
Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 6/23/2014
Supersedes:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments No. 52	Dated: 7/29/2013

Purpose

To clearly articulate a primary focus on child safety and to describe the process and requirements for conducting child safety investigations and assessments as defined in [Title 33](#), [Chapter 49](#) and [Chapter 51](#).

Table of Contents

Purpose	1
Policy	2
Child Safety Response	2
Requirements for Commencing Child Safety Interventions.....	3
Supervising Child Safety Interventions	4
Requirements for Child Safety Interventions.....	4
Planning the Child Safety Intervention	5
Assessing Safety	6
Reassignment from Chapter 49 Child Safety Assessment to Child Safety Investigation.....	7
Law Enforcement Assistance in Child Safety Interventions	8
Child Safety Interventions Involving Residential and Child Care Licensing	9
Federal Requirements to Inform	9
Vermont Requirements to Inform.....	9
Working with Individuals with Limited English Proficiency	9
Photographs and X-Rays during Child Safety Investigations	10
Access to Children during Child Safety Interventions.....	11
Additional Interviews	12
Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator	12
Co-occurring Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence.....	13
Substance Use / Abuse	13
Safe Sleep	14
Working with Individuals with Disabilities.....	14
Risk Assessment.....	14

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 2 of 22
Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 6/23/2014
Supersedes:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments No. 52	Dated: 7/29/2013

Completing the Child Safety Intervention	16
Plan of Safe Care	17
Notification of Mandated Reporters	17
Informing Child's Caregiver of Case Disposition.....	17
Referral to Child Development Division's Early Intervention Programs.....	18
Entries into the SSMIS Child Abuse and Neglect Report	18
Guidelines for Case Opening	19
Supervisor Tasks	21

Policy

This policy is applicable whenever the division has determined a report of child abuse or neglect is valid and will receive a child safety intervention. These child safety interventions are investigations and assessments and unless otherwise indicated by a text box, policy and procedures are the same for both interventions.

Child Safety Response

The first priority of the social worker is to assess child safety:

- Is the child safe now?
- If not, what needs to be done to promote safety?
- Is out of home placement necessary?
- If the child must leave home, is a familiar person available to provide short-term care?
- Is DCF custody a necessary element to promote safety?

Child safety interventions consist of two phases:

Phase 1: Safety determination - where social workers use the Assessment of Safety and Danger to determine if the child is safe, conditionally safe or unsafe.

Phase 2: Assessment and planning - where social workers use family engagement

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 3 of 22

strategies including the Family Risk Assessment to assess risk and work with the family to prevent the placement of children in out of home care and to promote well-being.

Requirements for Commencing Child Safety Interventions

When information is received that is considered a valid allegation, the division shall commence a child safety intervention **within 72 hours**.

Commence means...	
Investigation	Within 72 hours, staff will interview the child, or if the child is non verbal, observe the child. An interview by law enforcement does not substitute for investigation commencement.
Assessment	Within 72 hours, staff will contact the person responsible for the child's welfare as listed in the intake.

The district director or an operations manager may waive the requirement to commence a child safety intervention only when, in his or her judgment:

Investigations	Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be harmful to the child¹; there is danger to the social worker; or the victim cannot be located. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social worker is unable to locate the person responsible for the child's welfare as listed in the intake; it would be harmful to the child; or there is danger to the social worker.

The waiver must be granted before 72 hours. The rationale for the waiver and the date the child safety intervention will commence must be documented in FSDNet. The social worker is responsible for documentation of the anticipated commence date and activity necessary for commencement. If the anticipated commence date passes, the supervisor is responsible for daily documentation of efforts to commence the intervention. This will be documented as an append on the intake by the supervisor.

It is expected that issues necessitating the waiver will be addressed immediately so the child safety intervention commences as soon as possible.

¹ **Example:** when commencing the investigation within 72 hours would result in repeated interviews to the child when the child is not at imminent risk and the alleged perpetrator will not have unsupervised access to the child.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 4 of 22

There may be times, under extraordinary circumstances, when a social worker cannot interview a child. If this occurs, the district director is required to submit a written request to the operations manager for approval.

Supervising Child Safety Interventions

The child safety intervention supervisor will supervise all child safety interventions, even if the social worker normally reports to another supervisor.

Requirements for Child Safety Interventions

The division **must** commence child safety interventions according to the timeframe on page 2 of this policy. Unless unreasonable the division shall also:

Investigations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the child's residence, and • Visit the location of the alleged abuse or neglect, to determine: • the nature, extent and cause of the abuse or neglect; • the identity of the person responsible for the abuse or neglect; • the names and conditions of any other children living in the same environment; • any immediate and long term risk to each child if the child remains in the existing home environment; and • the environment and the relationship of any children in the home to the person responsible for the abuse and neglect. • Give the Child Safety Intervention brochure to the parent (s) to notify them about their rights and about how they can access Family Services Policy. <p>There may be times, under extraordinary circumstances, when a social worker can not interview the alleged victim. If these circumstances exist, the district director is required to submit a written request to the operations manager for approval.</p>	
Assessments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the child's residence. • Interview other adult s residing in the child's home who serve in a parental role. The interview will focus on ensuring immediate safety of the child and mitigating future risk of harm using an approach that engages the family in a collaborative process. 	
Chapter 49	Interview or observe the subject child within 5 days of the initial contact. If a family refuses access to the child, the division shall commence an investigation. In certain situations it may not be in the child's best interest to be interviewed and the

Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 5 of 22

	<p>circumstances do not warrant a track change.</p> <p>There may be times, under extraordinary circumstances, when a social worker can not interview the alleged victim. If these circumstances exist, the district director is required to submit a written request to the operations manager for approval.</p>
CHINS B	<p>If family refuses access to the child, evaluate situation to determine if there are any underlying Chapter 49 issues, if so, discuss with supervisor to determine whether to make a report to CIU or to submit an affidavit. If not, evaluate for service needs and either open ongoing family case or close assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the safety of any other children living in the same home. The evaluation may include an interview or observation of the other child and will occur with the permission of the child's parent, guardian or custodian. • Collaborate with the family to identify the family's unique strengths, resources and services needs and develop a plan of services that reduces the risk of harm and improves or restores family well-being. • Give the Child Safety Intervention brochure to the parent (s) to notify them about their rights and about how they can access Family Services Policy.

If a particular activity above is not reasonable or relevant under the facts and circumstances presented by the particular valid allegation of child abuse or neglect, the social worker must document the reason for that judgment in the case determination section.

Planning the Child Safety Intervention

Thoughtful planning of a child safety intervention is critical, in order to minimize the risk to the child, other family members, and the social worker. Issues to be considered in planning include:

- What history does the division have with the family?
- Could the intervention place the child at higher risk? How can we minimize that risk?
- How do issues of domestic violence or substance abuse in the family affect the approach to the intervention?
- Are there risks to the social worker? How can they be minimized?
- Is police involvement indicated?
- What is the appropriate sequence of interviews?
- In an investigation, is it necessary to interview the child without parental permission? If so, what environment will be most comfortable for the child? Who is the appropriate disinterested party to be present?
- How can repeat interviews, especially with the child, be avoided?

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 6 of 22

Regardless of the specific incident that meets criteria for acceptance other issues identified in the intake or discovered through out the course of the child safety intervention such as DV, substance abuse or risk of harm sexual, should be addressed in the current child safety intervention.

Assessing Safety

The assessment of safety is the first priority during a child safety intervention. Safety assessment focuses on present or impending danger to the child. It is a casework process that involves the social worker, the family, and others who are engaged with the family.

- A child is in **present danger** when an immediate, significant and clearly observable family condition is currently endangering or threatening to endanger a child and therefore requires prompt response.
- There is **impending danger** when family behaviors, attitudes, motives, emotions and/or situations pose a danger that may not be currently or always active, but can be anticipated to become active and have severe effects on a child at any time.

The assessment of safety requires evaluating present dangers, child vulnerability, child and family protective capacities.

- **Present dangers** are caretaker conditions that lead to serious harm or risk of serious harm.
- **Child vulnerabilities** are characteristics that make the child more likely to be maltreated and less likely to be able to participate in a plan for safety. Children in the home must be assessed independently.
- **Protective capacities** are attributes that can mitigate the presence of or threat of serious harm to a child when activated on the child's behalf. Not all family strengths are protective capacities.

The safety assessment focuses on determining if the child is safe or unsafe:

- **Safe** is a condition in which there are no danger indicators; the child appears to be safe.
- **Safe with Safety Plan** — There is at least one danger indicator, and there may be protective capacities that can mitigate the danger. A safety plan is in place that addresses the identified dangers, and if successfully carried out, will allow the

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 7 of 22

children to remain in the home. The plan may include informal placement with a safe friend, relative or non-resident parent as a temporary measure.

- **Unsafe** — There is at least one danger indicator, and protective capacities are not sufficient to mitigate the danger at this time. A court order or voluntary care agreement with placement outside the home for one or more children is the only way possible to protect the child from immediate or serious harm.

The **Assessment of Danger and Safety** is a tool for the documentation of the safety assessment and the safety plan and is completed in phase one of the child safety intervention. The Safety Assessment tool must be documented within **24 hours** of the first interview with the family. If any danger items are selected, the Family Safety Planning framework will be used to complete a safety plan with the family unless the safety assessment and situation indicate the child can not be safe and an affidavit will be filed.

Reassignment from Chapter 49 Child Safety Assessment to Child Safety Investigation

The division shall begin an immediate child safety investigation if, at any time during a Chapter 49 child safety assessment, it appears that an investigation is warranted.

Track reassignment will be requested using [FS-592](#). Examples of situations when track reassignment may occur are below.

This list is not exhaustive and district directors should exercise discretion.

1. The social worker or supervisor determines that criteria for mandatory investigation are met (see [Policy 51](#)), in spite of what was known at the time the report was accepted and assigned.
2. The child's condition requires photographs, x-rays or other medical imaging and the parent refuses permission.
3. The person responsible for the child's welfare is unwilling to allow us to interview or observe the child within 5 days of the initial contact. The social worker should inform the person responsible for the child's welfare of the division's obligation to assess child safety and the intent to reassign the matter for investigation, so he or she can make an informed decision.
4. The parent or caretaker is unwilling to cooperate in a discussion of the concern or a plan to address the identified issue after reasonable attempts have been made by the division to overcome initial lack of cooperation.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 8 of 22

A social worker may use professional judgment to change to an investigation response if during a field visit it becomes apparent that criteria for mandatory investigation are met (#1 above.) Changes for other reasons must be approved by the district director.

Once approved, the supervisor must document the rationale for track reassignment and the date of the track change in FSDNet as an append to the intake. The assigned social worker must commence the investigation or apply for a waiver within 72 hours of the track reassignment. The investigation must be completed within 60 days from the date the original assessment was assigned.

Law Enforcement Assistance in Child Safety Interventions

Assistance from law enforcement will be requested in all:

- investigations of child sexual abuse by an alleged perpetrator age 10 or older;
- investigations of serious physical abuse or neglect likely to result in criminal charges or requiring emergency medical care (examples include broken bones, head injuries, etc);
- any accepted child safety intervention potentially dangerous to the child or social worker.

Assistance from law enforcement may also be requested in other situations, according to local protocols. When the social worker and law enforcement are jointly investigating a report of child abuse or neglect pursuant to state or local protocols, the officer will be considered a person assigned by the Commissioner to investigate child maltreatment under [**33 VSA §4915\(d\)**](#). Under those circumstances, written information from the case record may be shared with the officer.

However, since information contained in police records is discoverable if the perpetrator is charged criminally, only information directly relevant to the investigation should be shared.

Consultation with the Assistant Attorney General's office is recommended in circumstances when written information from the case record is needed by law enforcement that is not directly relevant to the intervention.

When the completion of an investigation is delayed past policy guidelines due to a delay in interviews by law enforcement, the division shall inform law enforcement that we will proceed with an interview of the alleged perpetrator by a designated date, thus giving law enforcement an opportunity to schedule their interviews by that date, if desired.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 9 of 22

Child Safety Interventions Involving Residential and Child Care Licensing

If, during a child safety intervention, the social worker learns that the perpetrator resides or receives services in a licensed or approved facility (including home settings) serving children, the social worker will notify the SIU immediately.

Federal Requirements to Inform

In all child safety interventions the division must:

- Inform the parent or guardian of the child that a report has been accepted as a valid allegation and that the division is conducting an investigation or assessment.
- Inform the alleged perpetrator, at the time of the initial contact, about the complaint or allegation made against the individual. In making this notification, the confidentiality of the reporter will be protected, unless the reporter has given permission for his or her identity to be shared.

Vermont Requirements to Inform

Before interviewing any person as part of a child safety intervention, the social worker will make the person aware of their right to receive reasonable accommodations in order to participate in the interview. Suggested language for notification is as follows:

“DCF has received a call expressing concern that your child may be abused or neglected. We need to speak to you about that concern.

If you have a disability and need, or think you may need, an accommodation in order to participate in the interview, please let us know. We will discuss your needs and provide you with a reasonable accommodation.”

Working with Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

As an agency receiving federal funds, the division is governed by Federal Executive Order [**#13166**](#) which required that agencies adopt plans to ensure that persons limited in English proficiency "can meaningfully access programs and activities."

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 10 of 22

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) policy requires that all departments provide language assistance as may be needed to ensure meaningful access to our programs. AHS maintains three forms of interpretive services:

- In-person Interpretive Services — The Agency maintains contracts to provide in-person interpretive services throughout the state.
- Written Translation Services — The State, through the Department of Information & Innovation, maintains a contract to provide translation of documents, brochures, application forms and any other needed written materials for all state agencies and departments.
- Telephonic Services — The State, through the Department of Information & Innovation, maintains a contract for assistance to allow all state agencies and departments to access interpretive and translation services telephonically.

When conducting a child safety intervention in which a caretaker or child has limited English proficiency, the social worker will arrange for appropriate interpretive services. Children will not be asked to interpret for their caregivers.

Photographs and X-Rays during Child Safety Investigations

If, in the course of an investigation, trauma to the child is visible, photographs should be taken of the injuries. This may occur without parental permission.


At times during an investigation, the social worker or a physician may determine that child should receive a physical or a radiological examination. These may be conducted without consent of the child's parent or guardian.

Unless it would compromise the child's safety, parental permission should be sought.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 11 of 22

Access to Children during Child Safety Interventions

Investigations
<p>The social worker must interview or, for a non-verbal child, observe the alleged victim to commence the investigation. The interview should be carefully planned to avoid the necessity of subsequent interviews. Other children in the home will also be interviewed when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are concerns about their safety; or • they may have information important to assess the safety of the alleged victim. <p>If necessary to assure a child's safety, the alleged victim or other children in the home may be interviewed without the permission of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian. This interview must take place in the presence of a disinterested adult, such as a teacher, nurse, member of the clergy, etc. Law enforcement officers are not disinterested adults.</p> <p>When an interview occurs without parental permission, the parent should be informed and interviewed as soon as is reasonable and safe. The confidentiality of the reporter will be protected, unless the reporter has given permission for his or her identity to be shared. In most situations, subsequent interviews should take place with the parent's awareness and permission. Subsequent interviews of children without parental permission may occur with the approval of a supervisor.</p> <p>There may be times, under extraordinary circumstances, when a social worker can not interview the alleged victim. If these circumstances exist, the district director is required to submit a written request to the operations manager for approval.</p>
Assessments
<p>The social worker must interview or, for a non-verbal child, observe the child within 5 days of the initial contact unless the social worker can verify that the child is safe through an independent, objective professional source (physician, day care provider, teacher, etc.). If this is the case, the social worker must interview or observe the child before the assessment is concluded within 45 days.</p> <p>Chapter 49 Assessments There may be times, under extraordinary circumstances, when a social worker can not interview the alleged victim. If these circumstances exist, the district director is required to submit a written request to the operations manager for approval.</p> <p>CHINS B Assessments Only - If family refuses access to the child, evaluate situation to determine if there are any underlying Chapter 49 issues. If so, discuss with supervisor to determine whether to make a report to CIU or to submit an affidavit. If not, evaluate for service needs and either open ongoing family case or close assessment.</p>

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 12 of 22

Additional Interviews

The social worker will also interview:

- the reporter, if it is reasonable to believe the person has information concerning the event or the circumstances of the child's care;
- other people who may have information about the child and family, including persons suggested by the family.

The supervisor may waive these additional interviews if it is not in the best interest of the child to speak with these people.

In co-occurring child abuse and domestic violence cases, a complete and accurate child safety intervention is most likely to occur when the adult victims and children are interviewed in supportive and confidential sessions separate from the batterer.

In conducting interviews, care should be taken to protect the confidentiality of the child and family, revealing only what is absolutely necessary to obtain desired information. Information provided about domestic violence should not be shared with the alleged perpetrator of domestic violence.

Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator

The social worker will interview the alleged perpetrator during the child safety intervention, unless that person:

- refuses to be interviewed;
- is a minor and his/her parents refuse to give permission;
- is not the child's parent or caretaker and has been interviewed by the police in the context of a joint investigation;
- is not residing in the home and has been interviewed by the police in the context of a joint investigation; or
- cannot be located.

The **Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003** (Public Law 108-36) requires that the investigating social worker inform the alleged perpetrator, at the time of the initial contact, of the complaint or allegation made against the individual.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 13 of 22

The confidentiality of the reporter will be protected, unless the reporter has given permission for his or her identity to be shared.

If the social worker and supervisor believe that an alleged perpetrator should not be interviewed because it would increase risk (an example would include circumstances where domestic violence and child abuse co-occur) consultation with the Child Protection Director or Operations Manager will occur.

If the alleged perpetrator is in DCF custody, please see [Policy 66](#) Interviewing Children in Custody.

Co-occurring Child Maltreatment and Domestic Violence

Child safety interventions may involve co-occurring domestic violence. In such cases, although our primary duty is to ensure child safety, ensuring safety for the adult victim is often closely linked to ensuring safety for the child.

Safe intervention when child maltreatment and domestic violence co-occurs requires addressing risks to both children and adults who fear retaliation or harm by the batterer as a result of our intervention. Examples of safe intervention practices include:

- Interviewing adult victims and children in supportive and confidential sessions separate from the batterer; and
- Developing safety plans in collaboration with the adult victim and children that address their unique immediate and future safety needs.

Information provided about domestic violence should not be shared with the alleged perpetrator of domestic violence.

When documenting information regarding domestic violence, the social worker should avoid language that blames the adult victim for the batterer's abusive behavior.

Substance Use / Abuse

Nationwide, federal [Child and Family Services Reviews](#) have documented that parental substance use disorders were a factor in 16% to 48% of cases. Substance use disorders were found in families who repeatedly came to the attention of the child protection agency.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 14 of 22

Social workers should be informed about and comfortable in screening for substance use issues in order to appropriately engage families to address underlying issues of risk. In addition to utilizing the information contained within the accepted report, social workers may utilize the screen found in the Appendices section of Family Services Division Policy Manual ([Appendix 9](#)) in an effort to identify substance use issues that may need further professional assessment.

If any of the answers are yes, a referral to professional assessment is appropriate.

Safe Sleep

One of the leading causes of preventable infant death is related to unsafe sleep practices. In an effort to prevent these deaths, social workers shall do the following:

- Have a discussion about Safe Sleep with any family that has a child under age 1 and/or is currently pregnant letting the parent know about the recommendations and will document this discussion in casenotes
- Provide the parent of any child under age 1 and / or who is pregnant with a copy of the Safe Sleep Poster so that they have a hard copy of the materials for future reference and will document giving this poster to the parent in casenotes.

Poster is available at:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/Safe%20Sleep%20Poster.pdf>

Working with Individuals with Disabilities

The department recognizes that persons with a disability can be successful parents and may need reasonable accommodations, including adaptive equipment and supports. When a parent identifies as having a disability the assessment of service needs will be developed with input from and in cooperation with a person with relevant expertise. The department will make referrals as appropriate.

Risk Assessment

The social worker will complete a Family Risk Assessment during the assessment and planning phase of the child safety intervention to inform the decision about opening the case for ongoing services. The timeframe for completion of the risk assessment is noted below.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 15 of 22

Risk assessments are completed on households. When a child's parents do not live together, the child may be a member of two households. Always assess the household of the caretaker who is an alleged perpetrator. This may be the child's primary residence if it is also the residence of the alleged perpetrator or the household of a non resident parent if it is the alleged perpetrator's residence.

If the alleged perpetrator is not a caregiver and is not a member of the child's household assessments are only used if there is a question about the caregiver's ability to protect. This does not require a separate accepted allegation of risk of harm.

By completing the risk assessment, the social worker obtains an objective appraisal of the likelihood that a family will maltreat their children in the next 12 to 18 months. The Family Risk Assessment ***does not predict*** occurrence or recurrence, but simply assesses whether a family is more or less likely to have abuse/neglect incident without intervention.

The SDM Risk Assessment also includes information related to Protective Capacities. Protective capacities are not actuarial items. There has not been research to determine whether there is a relationship between the presence of protective capacities and risk issues that are identified. In the current risk assessment, protective capacities should be considered in regard to a discretionary override if the social worker / supervisor / director's judgment is that the available protective capacities clearly mitigate the likelihood of future maltreatment.

Risk Assessment	
Investigation	Must be completed no later than 60 days from acceptance of the valid allegation
Assessment	Must be completed no later than 45 days from acceptance of the valid allegation

Requests for a Discretionary Override

The risk assessment allows for the use of discretionary override. The risk level may be overridden one level higher or one level lower. Supervisory approval is needed to override the risk to a higher level. District director or designee approval is needed when overriding the risk to a lower level. If an override is approved this is the final risk level, the level used to determine if a CF case will be opened for ongoing services.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 16 of 22

When reviewing requests for a discretionary override to a lower level of risk, the following will be provided to the District Director for their consideration:

1. A brief summary (1-2 paragraphs) by worker/supervisor including why case was accepted for investigation/assessment as well as date of last contact with family. In addition, the date of the last in-person / in-home contact should be noted. An In-home/in-person visit must occur within five days of the override request.
2. Copy of Risk Assessment including explanation of any identified risk items that are scored.
3. Detailed explanation of any protective capacities scored and how they directly mitigate the risk issues identified on the Risk Assessment.
4. Static and Dynamic Factors:
 - a. Identify the static factors and what the story is behind them.
 - b. Identify the dynamic factors and how those are being actively addressed.
5. What are the protective factors? After having discussed w/ the family, check them off on the list and identify them on the request.
6. What formal referrals have been made and what services are now in place? If a referral was made, what is the status? If there is a wait list, please identify.
7. What informal supports does the family have? Who are they and how will they assist in mitigating the risk factors?

Information should be included from both the safety intervention social worker and the on-going social worker assigned to the case.

Completing the Child Safety Intervention

Investigations	Assessments
All child safety investigations must be concluded within 60 days and require a case determination.	All child safety assessments must be completed in 45 days, 60 days with written justification and the approval of a supervisor. Focus is on family's need for ongoing services to reduce the risk of future child maltreatment.
Concluding an investigation means that the social worker has completed all interviews and required investigation documentation, a case determination has been made, the supervisor has	Completing the assessment requires that the social worker has interviewed or observed the child, has completed all interviews and required documentation, the supervisor has made a case

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 17 of 22

made a case disposition and completed online tools, and the caretakers and alleged perpetrator(s) are informed of the outcome (see Policy 56).	disposition in FSDNet, and the caretaker is informed of the outcome.
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If a child comes into custody during the child safety intervention due to an emergency detention hearing, the social worker still needs to complete all steps of the investigation or the assessment.

Plan of Safe Care

In cases accepted due to a concern that an infant born and identified as being affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, a plan of safe care will be created and documented in the Case Determination. The plan of safe care will include information about services / referrals made to Early Intervention services as well as other planning that took place relative to the child's needs.

Notification of Mandated Reporters

Centralized Intake shall inform mandated reporters:

- Whether the report was accepted as a valid allegation.

District offices shall inform mandated reporters:

- Whether an assessment was conducted and if so, whether a need for DCF services was found.
- Whether an investigation was conducted and, if so, whether it resulted in substantiation.

Informing Child's Caregiver of Case Disposition

The child's parent, guardian, foster parent, or any other adult residing in the child's home who serves in a parental role will be informed of the case disposition. They will be informed verbally, whenever possible, and subsequently documented in the case file, and by the following letters.

Number	Case Disposition
306J	Closing with Recommendations

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 18 of 22

306K	Closing with no Recommendations
306-L	Ongoing FSD Services

Notice will be sent at the conclusion of the child safety intervention unless the district director determines notice will compromise an ongoing criminal investigation. In these circumstances, all documentation required for a completed child safety intervention will be entered into FSDNet up until the social worker's determination.

The social worker's determination, the supervisory review, the 590 and the Supervisory Tracking Form will be completed immediately when the law enforcement case is resolved. This is to ensure that (1) case documentation is timely and complete and (2) districts do not send the case disposition letter, which may interfere with the law enforcement case.

In cases where the alleged perpetrator is also a perpetrator of domestic violence, notification may cause risk to the child and adult victims. The social worker should attempt to contact the adult victim to inform her or him that the perpetrator is receiving notice.

Referral to Child Development Division's Early Intervention Programs

In accordance with the [Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act](#) (CAPTA), children under the age of 3 years who reside in a family where there is a substantiation of abuse or neglect, will be referred to the local Children's Integrated Services (CIS) Early Intervention program. The referral will occur at the time of the division's determination by the social worker or supervisor. If the child remains in the home, Family Services will include information about services available through the early intervention program in the determination letter.

If the following circumstances exist the social worker will discuss making a referral to the local Children's Integrated Services Team and/or Head Start and Early Start as a resource to the family.

- Children under the age of 3 years reside in a family where the risk level or unresolved danger requires ongoing FSD services; or
- There is a pregnant woman and/or child from birth through age 6 and the social worker identifies possible concerns around health, developmental or mental health, or if the family reports a concern in these areas.

Entries into the SSMIS Child Abuse and Neglect Report

The case determination and all required information will be entered into the SSMIS Child

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		52
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 19 of 22

Abuse Report and the Supervisory Tracking Form after a case determination has been made by the supervisor and the alleged perpetrator has been sent the determination letter. The information in the child abuse report about child safety interventions is used in the master index and to generate federal reports.

The District Office will enter all case determinations into SSMIS at the time the determination letter is mailed, including the following fields:

Field Label	Data Entry
Inv/Assess	A (for assessment)
Case Open?	Y if case will be opened for ongoing services; N if not

Guidelines for Case Opening

The Risk Assessment estimates the probability of future maltreatment in the household. The higher the risk, the more important it is to engage the family in identifying supports and services to prevent harm. Social workers will complete the Risk Assessment as the conclusion of the child safety intervention to assist in determining the need for ongoing Family Services involvement. A case **must** be opened for ongoing services if any of the following criteria is met.

- The family is at high or very high risk as indicated by the final risk level on the Family Risk Assessment; or
- The family has a danger issue that could not be resolved during the child safety intervention, **regardless of risk level**; or
- The family requires FS involvement beyond 60 days of acceptance of the child safety intervention to ensure engagement with services or other support or monitoring.

If the district wants to open a case outside of these guidelines the district director must support the decision and the supervisor must document the rationale in the case determination.

There will be times when it is necessary to keep a child safety investigation open longer than 60 days due to law enforcement activity and/or a criminal investigation **and** there are no unresolved dangers and the Family Risk Assessment is not indicating the need to open an ongoing family case. In these situations, all documentation on the CI must be up to date in

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 20 of 22

FSDNet and remaining documentation and data entry must be completed immediately when the law enforcement/criminal case is resolved. District directors will discuss these cases with their operations manager.

If the risk assessment is high or very high a CF case should be opened for ongoing services and the CI may remain open with documentation on steps necessary to resolve the outstanding law enforcement issue.

The ongoing case opening process will be concluded within 5 working days and includes:

- supervisory review;
- concluding the CI (child safety investigation), CA (child safety assessment) or CJ (child safety assessment) case and entering the necessary data on the Supervisory Tracking Form to indicate a case will be opened for ongoing services;
- assignment of social worker in SSMIS;
- contact with the family to schedule an initial visit to review the safety plan and to engage family in developing the initial case plan; and
- ensures that the parent(s) have received a copy of the Child Safety Intervention brochure which notifies them about their rights and about how they can access Family Services Policy.

Compliance with all ongoing casework policies is required.

If a family refuses ongoing services the social worker should consult with his or her supervisor for **a discussion of any unresolved danger** and a decision about whether to pursue a court order for services.

If unable to provide ongoing services because the family refuses and there will be no court order, consider connecting family to community services. Document the reason ongoing services were not provided in case notes.

Social Worker Tasks

- Reviews report and results of master index, central registry and department of corrections checks.
- Confers with district staff who have knowledge of the family.
- Identifies any other individuals who need to be contacted.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 21 of 22

- Commences child safety intervention according to policy.
- Provides Child Safety Intervention brochure to parents as appropriate.
- Conducts other necessary interviews, as indicated in policy.
- Informs any person to be interviewed that if they identify themselves as having a disability and needing an accommodation to participate in the interview, the division will provide reasonable accommodation.
- Completes necessary SDM Tools, including documenting specific information from police affidavits or reports to provide relevant detail that supports the determination.
 - Safety Assessment (within 24 hours of commencement)
 - FSP Framework (required when any danger item is scored yes on the Assessment of Safety and Danger)
 - Risk Assessment (as the conclusion of the child safety intervention, within 45 days)
 - Investigation Activities Summary
 - Safety Assessment (before end of child safety intervention if any danger item was scored yes at time of initial Assessment of Safety and Danger AND recommendation is to close case)
 - Case Determination

Note: Safety is dynamic and often changes throughout the life of a child safety intervention. If there is a substantial change in the family's situation that indicates a child may be in danger, the social worker should assess safety and danger accordingly.

- Documents child safety intervention interviews and activity in the automated system within a week of contact.
- Completes all tasks within policy timeframes.

Supervisor Tasks

- Determines the nature and immediacy of response using the Response Priority Tool.
- Makes recommendation to district director on waiving the 72 hour mandate, if indicated.
- Assists the social worker in planning the child safety intervention, addressing issues of child and social worker safety.
- Determines the need for law enforcement assistance.
- Determines if any required interviews should be waived or if subsequent interviews of a child without parental permission are warranted.
- Reviews child safety interventions at least weekly with social worker to ensure policy compliance with timeframes for commencement, completion of SDM Tools case closure

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>52</h1>
Chapter:	Child Safety	
Subject:	Child Safety Interventions: Investigations and Assessments	Page 22 of 22

requirements.

- Ensures that high/very high risk cases are open for ongoing services including SSMIS data entry and contact with the family within 5 working days from the date the risk assessment indicates the risk level.
- Searches available databases to determine whether or not the caretaker and alleged perpetrator, as well as other adults residing in the home, have prior substantiations or involvement with Family Services, and assesses whether or not this information is relevant to the case determination decision.
- Reviews completed child safety intervention tools within 60 days. This review should be conducted by the supervisor within each office assigned the duties of intake and investigation.
- Ensures that social workers are using the SDM definitions when completing all SDM tools.
- Review request for risk level override if necessary.